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SUBJECT: GHANA POLITICAL ROUNDUP

¶1. SUMMARY: The 2008 Presidential race to succeed President Kufuor continues to heat up as prominent members of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP), including Vice President Aliu Mahama and Former Trade Minister Alan Kyerematen, have complained that the NPP's nomination process has not been transparent. Meanwhile, the Attorney General announced the creation of a special task force to investigate corruption allegations in Parliament. The Convention People's Party, the party of Ghanaian founding father Kwame Nkrumah, has postponed its convention again to December 15. And the Ghana Police sacked nineteen more officers for corruption. Finally, courts in Accra sentenced two Venezuelans, arrested in 2005, to 20 and 25 years in prison for possession of nearly 600 kilograms of cocaine. END SUMMARY.

NPP Missteps in Vetting of Presidential Candidates

¶2. Leading candidates for the ruling NPP's nomination for the 2008 Presidential Election, including Vice President Aliu Mahama and former Trade Minister Alan Kyerematen, have voiced concern about the NPP's candidate selection process, claiming it is not transparent and potentially unfair. This followed leaks to the press of confidential information from each candidate's files during the

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"vetting" process. As a result of this outcry, the NPP is allowing candidates to form committees to work closely with the NPP's election and congress planning teams ahead of the December 22 Congress. The NPP concluded vetting of candidates on November 28 and the official list of candidates is expected to be released in early December. President Kufuor's recent statement that he has a good idea who will succeed him among the 19 presidential candidates has added suspicion to the nomination process and generated ill will among many candidates amidst the widespread perception that Kufuor is providing financial support to Kyerematen's candidacy.

Attorney General to Act on Corruption in Parliament

¶3. As a result of the recent scandals uncovered by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Ghana's Parliament, Attorney General Joe Ghartey declared on November 15 that he is creating a special task force to prosecute these cases. Recent statements from GOG officials indicate that several million dollars worth of state money was embezzled or stolen through the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). Ghartey said that until a special financial tribunal is convened to hear these cases, the cases will be tried in the regular court system.

CPP Postpones Congress to December 15

¶4. The Convention People's Party (CPP) has postponed its Congress, for the third time, to December 15 because of "operational difficulties." CPP General Secretary Prof. Nii Noi Dowuona said the postponement was due to the inability of CPP officials to complete local elections, a prerequisite for the Congress. Delegates are

expected to elect a presidential candidate and national executive officers. The frontrunners for the CPP nomination are Professor Agyemang Badu Akosa, former Director-General of Ghana Health Service and Dr. Paa Kwesi Nduom, former Minister of Public Sector Reforms.

More Police Officers Sacked for Corruption

15. In the last month, as part of the Ghana Police Service's (GPS) ongoing efforts to root out corruption in its ranks, the GPS dismissed 19 officers for various forms of misconduct. Throughout the year the GPS has dismissed hundreds of officers for breaching GPS rules and the law. The GPS is particularly focused on officers who engage in extortion and release prisoners early from their sentences.

Two Venezuelans Jailed on Drug Related Charges

16. On November 13, an Accra court sentenced two Venezuelan nationals, Joel Meija Duarte Moises and Italio Gervasio Rosero, aka Italio Cabeza Castillo, to 25 and 20 years in prison, respectively, in connection with the 2005 seizure of over 588 kilograms of cocaine in Accra. A third Venezuelan and the alleged mastermind behind the cocaine operation, Vasquez Gerado Duarte David, aka Bude, remains at large, but the court found him guilty in absentia and sentenced him to 25 years in prison. The convicts will be deported to Venezuela after serving their sentences.

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